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AUTHOR Gallagher, Paul
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ABSTRACT

An overview is provided of the community college sector of Canadian post-secondary education. The first section points out the characteristics shared by the wide range of institutions termed "community colleges," indicating that: (1) they are public institutions with low or no tuition for conventional full-time students; (2) they are products of provincial legislation and function as components of provincial post-secondary systems; (3) they offer diplomas, certificates, and other credentials, but are not degree-granting institutions; (4) they are known for their diversity of programming; (5) a growing proportion of community college activity involves skill upgrading and retraining of current members of the workforce; (6) admissions requirements differ by program; (7) students tend to be older than university undergraduates; and (8) the colleges are actively involved in the transfer of technology to the workforce. The next section offers brief descriptions of the community college systems operating in each province, noting that in all there are 200 community colleges or allied postsecondary institutions in Canada. The scale of the community college sector is assessed next in terms of enrollments (i.e., approximately 500,000 full-time and over 1,500,000 part-time students); and numbers of faculty, administrative and support personnel, and citizens serving on college boards and advisory committees. The next sections examine college governance structures, relations with the provincial and state governments, and unionization and labor relations within the colleges. Information on funding is provided next, indicating that the community colleges accounted for 9% of the total educational expenditures in Canada in 1984-85, with the three layers of government contributing 84% of direct college funding. The final sections identify some of the national and provincial organizations for community colleges, and offer conclusions. (EJV)

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COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN CANADA:

A CURRENT PROFILE

prepared for

THE NATIONAL FORUM ON POST SECONDARY EDUCATION
Saskatoon
October 25-28,1987

by
Paul Gallagher
Vancouver Community College

on behalf of
The Association of Canadian Community Colleges

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Community Colleges in Canada:

A Current Profile

Community colleges are the most recent additions to publicly supported post-secondary education in Canada. Extensive, differentiated, and designed specifically to be responsive to public policy shifts, the community college sector -- barely twenty years old -- has been a catalyst for change and evolution in post-secondary education.

These institutions defy simple categorization. Indeed, "community college" is more a generic than specific term in Canada, used to identify a wide range of institutions that operate at several educational levels concurrently. College of applied arts and technology, institute of technology, college d'enseignement general et professionnel (CÉGEP), regional college, and vocational centre are only some of the official titles of institutions in Canada that have chosen to include themselves within the community college sector.

Commonalities

The several different models for public college organization that have been developed throughout Canada reflect the distinctive socio-political-economic environments of the

provinces and territories.[1] However, organizational and structural differences -- at both institutional and system levels -- do not obscure important characteristics common across the country.

In essence, these institutions have four fundamental commonalities: they are public institutions with low or no tuition fees for conventional full-time students, but also with a number of fully cost recoverable programs; they are products of provincial legislation and function as components of provincial post-secondary systems; they offer diplomas, certificates, and other credentials but are not degree-granting institutions; they see it as part of their mission to provide leadership for change.

In addition, community colleges throughout Canada are known for their diversity of programming: state-of-the-art technological education; the training components of apprenticeship; occupational programs of lengths from a few weeks to three years to prepare students for employment in trades, primary industry, manufacturing, and a rich variety of para-professional careers in business, health, the arts, social service and allied fields; remedial adult education to prepare for more advanced study; pre-university and university-parallel transfer education in arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences; programs in post-secondary general education, courses and activities for general interest, and personal and community development initiatives. Few community colleges offer this full range at one time, but all

of them are distinguished by the breadth and variety of their programming.

A related similarity in the growing portion of community college activity that involves upgrading and retraining of people already in the workforce, rather than pre-employment education, and much of this work is done in the workplace or in other off-campus locations. Community colleges have long operated day, evening, and on weekends, twelve months a year. They see it as their mandate to adjust the range and kinds of educational service they provide to the changing social and economic needs of the communities and regions they serve.

As a result, admission requirements to all Canadian community colleges differ by program. These institutions also tailor make programs without formal academic admission requirements to suit changing needs of employment markets. Community colleges organize themselves to serve a broad spectrum of client-employers as well as individual students and, as a result, they commonly provide more student support services than other post-secondary institutions. Most are, in effect, comprehensive adult education and training centres as well as more conventional colleges for secondary school graduates. Many additionally serve as the community focal point for artistic and cultural activities.

Equally, across the country the majority of community college students are more mature than undergraduate students in university, because the part-time and short-term student population is so much greater than the full-time population. Colleges do, however, provide education and training for young secondary school graduates and drop outs, university transfers and graduates, and the adult population at large. As a result, the median age of community college students in programs leading to formal credentials is estimated to be in the order of 32 years.

The common college style of operation is characterized by quick response to newly perceived education, training, and employment needs -- local, provincial, or national. Instructional programs are in a continuing state of development, refinement, and change. Recent curriculum developments have included a general emphasis on the information technologies, the establishment of enterprise development centres, education for entrepreneurship, and the founding of centres of specialization or innovation at some of the larger institutions.

Colleges throughout Canada are actively involved in the transfer of technology to the work place. Several also have substantial international training components through which they contribute to Canada's export economy. Exercising leadership in addressing problems of adult illiteracy more aggressively than in

the past is but one current example of the college strategy of also responding to special need populations.

Similarly, it has been the common practice for colleges to place the greatest emphasis on their teaching role, although applied research has recently become a growing activity of several larger community colleges. Many college instructors hold doctorates; several years of industry-based experience as well as training in teaching are normally required for full-time instructors in most training programs. Staff development activities as well as regular instructional program evaluation have been standard features of community college operation, arising from their traditional insistence upon the currency of their programs and the quality of performance of their graduates. Accreditation of programs by external bodies is a well-established community college practice across Canada.

Most colleges in all parts of Canada are well housed and well equipped, and use the latest technological applications to learning. Sophisticated use of distance education is widespread, open learning and self-paced systems are common, and many programs are designed to graduate students as soon as they have met performance standards rather than after a pre-determined number of academic terms or years.

Everywhere in Canada, these institutions take pride in their

close working relationships with a variety of groups within their communities -- labour, business, community organizations, among others. All community colleges have community and employer-based program advisory committees which help shape curricula, keep programs current, and assist in graduate placement. Specifically designed community development programs have been a notable feature of many of these institutions, especially in smaller communities from coast to coast.

System Patterns Across Canada

These common characteristics, however, are generated through a variety of college systems throughout the country.

British Columbia has fifteen (15) colleges, four (4) specialized institutes with province-wide mandates, and an Open Learning Agency whose jurisdiction includes the school, college, university, government, and private sectors.

Yukon Territory is served by Yukon College, centred in Whitehorse but operating in several communities of that territory.

Alberta has eleven (11) colleges, three (3) institutes of technology, four (4) vocational centres, and a petroleum industry

training centre. It also serves smaller and more remote communities through college-institute-university consortia, and has established community-based further education councils.

The Northwest Territories support Arctic College which is headquartered in Yellowknife but has learning centres in both the Western and Eastern Arctic.

Saskatchewan has had fifteen (15) community colleges which primarily served as brokers with other institutions to bring educational service to all communities of the province. Four (4) technical or applied arts and science institutes of a more conventional kind rounded out Saskatchewan's college system. A regrouping of what had been separate colleges and institutes into fewer but more comprehensive institutions is currently underway.

Manitoba has three (3) colleges and one (1) vocational centre.

Ontario has twenty two (22) colleges of applied arts and technology, most having campuses in several communities. An Institute of Medical Technology and a network of five (5) agricultural technology centres complete the Ontario public college system.

Quebec has forty four (44) public comprehensive colleges of general and vocational education (CEGEP), thirty (30) publicly subsidized private CEGEP with more limited curricula, and twelve (12) specialized post-secondary institutes. Most CEGEP offer two-year programs, for both full-time and part-time students, required for university admission and three year programs for students wishing to enter the employment market upon graduation.

New Brunswick has a nine (9) campus college system, with educational service available in both French and English. This province also has eight (8) other post-secondary institutions that offer specialized training.

Nova Scotia has chosen not to establish a community college system to date. It has six (6) specialized post-secondary institutions in addition to its many universities. A Community College Study Committee is currently examining the feasibility of establishing a community college network for the province.

Prince Edward Island has one (1) community college, with training centres throughout the province. Holland College also offers specialized training for students from other Atlantic provinces.

Newfoundland has had one (1) community college, a college of trades and technology, an institute of fisheries and marine

technology, and fifteen (15) district vocational schools. It is now in the process of reshaping its post-secondary system and of establishing more community colleges.

In all, there are some two hundred (200) community colleges or allied post-secondary institutions throughout Canada.

Scale of the Community College Sector

There are now some 500,000 full-time students in Canada's community colleges.[2] (Statistics Canada figures frequently categorize trade, vocational, and pre-vocational courses separately.) This represents a growth from 49,000 in non-degree granting institutions in 1960 and an almost doubling of full-time enrolment between 1970 and 1981.[3] There have been more gradual but steady increases since 1981.

Accurate calculations of part-time enrolments are not available from provincial or national sources.[4] A conservative estimate is in excess of 1,500,000 part-time students in all community college programs.[5]

College student bodies include both the academically gifted and the educationally disadvantaged. Their programs and activities attract students from all strata of Canadian society,

but the traditionally disadvantaged have still not attained in practice the degree of access originally intended.[6]

There are now about 25,000 full-time faculty members[7] and an estimated 150,000 part-time instructors, seminar leaders, and other instructional personnel.

The best estimate of support and administrative personnel is in the order of 8-9,000. In addition, there are more than 1,200 citizens who serve voluntarily on college boards and an estimated 7,000 people from business, labour, and community organizations who serve on advisory committees.

As innovative and non-conventional institutions, community colleges have not had the benefit of accurate statistical tracking at either provincial or national levels. With a preponderance of part-time students in part-time or short term studies and a substantial component of part-time instructors, community colleges have not fitted into the neater categories associated with universities and schools. Nevertheless, the size of the community college sector, particularly as Canada moves towards becoming a lifelong learning society, is significant. There were more students in the community college sector than in the university sector by 1977 and the gap has grown annually since that time.

Governance and Government Relations

Community colleges and college systems were established through provincial legislation, most originally drafted in the 1963-72 period when such institutions were seen as instruments to relieve the enrolment pressures on universities, to meet an expanding demand for a domestic source of workers well-trained to meet the needs of a growing industrial economy, and to provide for more publicly supported education for adults at a time when more diversified educational opportunity for more people was seen as socially desirable and economically essential.

In some cases, colleges were established as directly dependent provincial government institutions. In the majority of cases, however, college boards were to govern these institutions, with board membership drawn from the communities to be served. Although board members in some provinces were originally selected at a community level, the current common pattern is for board members to be named by provincial and territorial governments. In instances where there are not college boards, it is common for colleges to have community-based consultative committees or councils. Throughout Canada, community colleges are in practice both locally-based and provincially-shaped institutions.

All community colleges make extensive use of advisory committees -- bodies established by these institutions to advise

on the orientation and substance of their instructional programs. Reciprocally, college representatives serve on a wide variety of business, labour, and community organizations as well as on consultative bodies established by governments at all levels.

In many jurisdictions faculty members and students serve on boards of governors. The role of faculty members in governance has been a recurring question and is currently a major issue in Ontario.

Community colleges have never had the measure of institutional autonomy typically associated with universities, nor have they sought an arm's length relationship to governments. Indeed, they have been seen and have viewed themselves as instruments of provincial economic and social policy at a local or regional level. At the other extreme, their relationship to provincial governments has been different from that of school districts in that they have typically had greater discretion to direct and manage their own affairs. Over the years, the tension between local autonomy and provincial direction has varied in intensity, but in the later-1980s the balance is now clearly in the direction of more centralist tendencies in all provinces; the reverse is true in the Yukon.

At the same time, community colleges serve national purposes. Most obviously, Employment and Immigration Canada

purchases "seats" in college programs in substantial numbers and subsidizes many college students as one means of meeting federal government training objectives. In addition, colleges have entered into a variety of special training agreements with federal government agencies.

In recent years, federal initiatives to encourage Canadian studies, to promote bilingualism and multiculturalism, to improve adult literacy, to meet special group needs, and to support the transfer of technology have also had a direct bearing on the orientation of and priorities within community colleges.

Indeed, Canadian community colleges have developed considerable expertise in the planning and management of change as they have learned to adjust to abrupt changes in federal government training policy, provincial policy shifts, and rapidly changing demand for graduates at a community level; and, despite major policy shifts and changing labour market patterns, their graduate placement record has remained consistently high.

Labour Relations

Most college employees in most provinces and territories are unionized under provincial/territorial legislation. The forms of unionization, however, differ dramatically from jurisdiction to

jurisdiction. In some provinces, college faculty members are provincial civil servants; in others, they have their own certifications. In Prince Edward Island, the technical and post-secondary instructors have a professional association, while other instructors have chosen a more conventional trade union structure. In Alberta, there is special labour legislation for the post-secondary sector. In most provinces, collective bargaining is conducted at a province-wide level, but bargaining in British Columbia and Alberta is institution specific.

College support staff are conventionally organized in all jurisdictions and, in Quebec, the non-instructional professional personnel are represented by an officially recognized association.

Finance

Statistics Canada reports that community colleges spent close to $3 billion in 1984-85, or 9% of total educational expenditures in Canada.[8] (The comparable figure for university expenditures in 1984-85 was $5.6 billion).

The three levels of government contributed 84% of direct community college funding with only 8% generated through tuition fees. The proportion of revenue from fees varied from a high of

13.6% in British Columbia to a low of 0 in the Northwest Territories where no fees are charged to territorial students. There are no tuition fees for full-time students in Quebec.

Community colleges receive the largest share of their government funding in the form of direct grants from provincial governments. However, substantial portions of these provincial funds have in fact been federally generated but redistributed under the Established Programme Funding arrangements.

The purchase of seats in established college programs by Employment and Immigration Canada, and contractual arrangements between Employment and Immigration Canada and community colleges to launch new programs consistent with federal training objectives have been additional major sources of federal participation in community college activity.

The 1985 introduction of the Canadian Jobs Strategy which puts greater emphasis on industry-based, market-driven training has caused community colleges to expand their role as contractors with both private and public sector bodies for education and training programs.[9] In effect, this strategy gives priority to government subsidization of employers rather than institutions to provide training: colleges, private sector trainers, and in-house training departments then compete as providers of training under the current federal approach to training.

Provincial and National Organization

A variety of provincial organizations have emerged to serve common college interests. In British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Quebec, there are province-wide organizations of board members and presidents. In all provinces college faculty members have some form of provincial association.

The national organization for community colleges is the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC)[10] with some 130 institutional members. This association is unique among Canadian educational organizations in that it is governed by representatives of all the major constituent groups within community colleges: board members or community representatives, students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Traditionally, the ACCC has given particular impetus to the promotion of Canadian Studies and to the facilitation of international programs. More recently, the Association has expanded its member information services, strengthened its national advocacy role, and established a cross-Canada network to address major national economic, social, and cultural issues.

Many college personnel are also active within The Canadian Vocational Association[11], a professional organization with representation from the school, college, university, and government sectors.

Conclusion

Throughout their short history, Canada's community colleges have pursued balance: the balance of responsiveness to local, regional, provincial, and national policy priorities; of innovation and stability; of adaptability and consistency; of planned development and quick reaction. The search for balance continues.

They have experimented successfully with curriculum, teaching methods, technological applications to learning, organizational structures, forms of governance. They have provided access to post-secondary opportunity of new kinds and for many who would have otherwise been denied. They have identified new markets for post-secondary education. They have enriched the meaning of the public service responsibility of publicly supported post-secondary institutions.

At the same time, they face continuing and new issues. They remain concerned about standards but maintain their commitment to encouraging students to test their own measure of ability and potential. They are still learning to be less dependent upon government funding through the establishment of foundations, expansion of domestic and international contract work, and aggressive diversification of their activities. They recognize

that they are now operating in an environment of private sector competition. They are becoming more sensitive to their need for more public understanding and support. In all, they are resisting institutionalization.

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